

The voice of Kalimpong

Himalayan Times

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HUMANITY

RED TAPED

By Karan Shah.

It may be a multi crore world bank funded project with the state of art equipments and high quality doctors but it seems sometimes availing facilities here depends on not how serious your condition is but on whether the forms have been filled up or not. As things stand today, a person struggling for his life may not receive treatment here if the red tape in not cut well in advance.

A middle-aged patient, suffering from malnutrition and dehydration died in the premises of the Sub-Divisional Hospital here after a battle for survival which lasted more than six hours. Leave alone a place on one of the hospital beds he was not even given first aid when he needed it most.

According to eyewitness reports, a couple of porters brought the patient to the hospital at around 3 pm recently and dumped him in the courtyard and disappeared, maybe fearing the red tape which often engulfs the best of intentions. The doctors, it was learnt, did not provide him with medical attention owing to the fact that no one had formally admitted him to the hospital. When they finally did, it was too late. The patient died at 9p.m. "He was fervently asking for a drop of water at the time of his death, so we gave him a bottle", an eyewitness said.

A resident of that locality, Mrs. Jyoti Karki, said that the death occurred allegedly due to the failure of the hospital to provide timely medical aid. "The sub-divisional medical officer and the ward master were closely watching the patient, so I thought that they would take care of him. But I was later shocked to find him in the same

condition at 8.30 p.m lying outside the OPD. I enquired with the hospital authorities and the doctor-on-duty about the case but they cited hospital rules regarding admission of a patient", Mrs. Karki said. Both the hospital authorities and Mr. Karki are said to have informed the police of the matter several times. The police officers, who walked into the hospital, refused to comment. The SDMO, Dr SR Pradhan, said the hospital cannot take in such guardian-less patients as it might involve legal hassles.

Admitting that the patient was suffering from malnutrition and dehydration, Dr. Pradhan claimed that such instances of patients dying unattended are nothing new. "People should understand their responsibilities", Dr Pradhan said. Mrs. Karki shot back, saying: "Admission and assistance are two different things. In this case, the SDMO should at least have provided medical assistance on humanitarian grounds".

Considering the fact that the S.D.Hospital of Kalimpong for long has been considered a temple of healing in the region with some of the best doctors, this incident is indeed a big shock. Ironically, the police have thrown the ball right back into the court of the hospital authorities. They claim that they cannot take on these "unknown cases". The question goes a-begging, how does one on death's door decide as to whose jurisdiction he falls under. ■

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LAND**
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EDITORIAL

Its been a gloomy gloomy last three months here- its been nothing but rain & rain & rain and more rains and nothing much more but out of the dark and threatening monsoon clouds a ray of hope appears to be glimmering for Kalimpong.

Maybe the rampant land slips, road blocks and the clogged jhoras that have ravaged our otherwise beautiful little town have been a boon in disguise. Maybe the rumbling thunder clouds have jolted the powers that be out of their mid year slumber, maybe the streams of water on our roads have acted as tears which have finally cleared their eyes but whatever the reason may be, it appears that people who are supposed to give governance to this town of ours seem to have finally woken up to the dangers that the ever degrading environment is posing to the future of our region.

The ban on plastic which the town Municipality has imposed is a step in the right direction. Plastic over the years has become the number one enemy of the hills and it was high time that an all out war was declared against it. We finally seem to realize that its now or never for us. Of course this is not the first time a ban on plastic has been imposed by the Kalimpong Municipality. If my memory serves me right, twice before too steps were initiated in this regard but there was no conviction behind the effort and probably the bans had lasted for a duration ever lesser than the paper posters announcing the bans.

The encouraging thing this time around is that the Kalimpong Municipality headed by Mr. C.K.Kumai seems to be serious about implementing the ban, well at least on the surface it appears as such. We hope they really are serious. We do not want to become one of those towns in Venezuela which are always under the threat of being annihilated by mud slides.

Dear Editor,

It appears that many of the department heads of Kalimpong have borrowed their skin from the Rhinos that have been disappearing from Kaziranga. Their skin appears so thick that no amount of complaining and no amount of media bashing actually makes any difference to them.

Whether it be the BSNL or WBSEB or the Municipality or for that matter any other department- nothing actually pricks them. For example in the past six months reams of paper have been spent discussing the sorry state of roads in the town. But nothing has been done by the concerned departments till now and most of the roads of the town have now become virtually dirt tracks. Is it a wonder then why posters like "Sell your car buy a horse", appear in certain parts of the town???

We consumers in Kalimpong have become nothing short of beggars where we have to beg the Officers concerned even for the basic services.

Someone should remind them that the salary that they receive is actually our hard earned money which we pay as tax.

N.K.Thapa

Bara Bhalukop

Dear Editor,

The article on Srijana Pradhan that was published in the last issue of your esteemed magazine is not of a unique kind. Srijanas family, it appears from your article, was a comparatively well off one in Calcutta, when such an affluent family could be treated in such a manner by the so called specialists then what chance do we from the middle and lower middle class have.

My experience is quite the same. My wife was suffering since last few years with severe stomach pains and other related problems of the stomach. The doctor in Siliguri whom we were consulting for almost a year and a half told us that it was nothing serious and the pain was due to some infection. It later turned out that she was suffering from something totally different due to which she is no longer with us now. Had correct diagnosis been done at the beginning, my wife would still have been alive.

A grieving husband urges all readers of this letter to better take a second (or even a third) opinion if and when any medical complications occur to anyone in your family.

Dil Bahadur Mangar

Rousay

DO YOU HAVE ANY THING THAT
YOU WANT TO SHARE WITH THE
REST OF

KALIMPONG??? YOUR
HAVE YOUR SAY AT PAGE

THE VOID MAY NEVER BE FILLED

Father McGuire passes away

The Creator probably did not mean it to be a coincidence that the one person in Kalimpong who gave hundreds of little children freedom from a life of poverty and insecurity himself received eternal freedom on that very day the rest of India too was celebrating its independence.

78 year old Father Edward McGuire of Gandhi Ashram School lives no more succumbing to a massive heart attack on the 15th of August. Father McGuire, many in Kalimpong referred to him as the Kalimpong Gandhi, was of Canadian-Irish descent and was associated with the Roman Catholic diocese of Darjeeling for the last fifty five years.

Though he has served the people of the Hills in several capacities his biggest contribution to Kalimpong was



the Gandhi Ashram School where children from financially weak backgrounds were given education free of cost but the USP of the school was the lessons in music that the children received in the school. Its violin choir over the years has managed to earn international recognition owing to the heart

warming concerts it held all across India and also in several European countries. For the children of Gandhi Ashram School, Father McGuire was much much more than just a teacher. Says Kushmita, an ex-student of the school, "Father was everything for us. There are no words which can explain what exactly he meant to all of us," the tears in her eyes actually explaining everything. Incidentally Kushmita is the most recognized student from Gandhi Ashram having earned a seat in a prestigious music school of Germany. (See Himalayan Times Vol 2 , Iss 2).

His contributions will always be spoken of whenever great men of Kalimpong are discussed in any forum.

(See another article on Gandhi Ashram on page 6 which is printed with the aim of honouring the great soul)

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BATTLE OF INDEPENDENCE Style Or Indecency

By Sandip C. Jain
with inputs from Anup Moktan

Pretty Young Things and even Handsome Young Things better watch out- chances are that your sleeveless and low cut T-Shirts or Tan tops or Skin tight pants or even your fancy ear studs may win you more embarrassments than admirers. With the moral cops, both in khaki or self-styled, out in the prowl- fashion has suddenly become a dreaded word in Kalimpong!! The Main Roads of Kalimpong which on Independence Day over the years had become more akin to one huge Fashion Ramp, suddenly this year, became too dangerous for ultra fashionable youngsters to venture on with members of several women organizations patrolling the streets intent on stopping fashion lovers from crossing the thin line between looking trendy and looking indecent. The efforts by the several women organizations of Kalimpong, with the blessings of certain Officers of the Kalimpong Police, on Independence Day to keep a check on skimpy clothing has understandably generated a lot of heat in Kalimpong with two distinct schools of thought emerging. One which celebrates the curb on fashion and one that thinks that this effort is an infringement on individual rights given by the Indian Constitution to its citizens. The drive by certain men in khaki to rob citizens of Kalimpong the right to wear ear studs seems to have generated even more heat. One particular police personnel seemed to have almost made it his full time duty looking out for “kundalays” (local slang used for people who wear ear rings). The Police view this drive as being a part of a drive to maintain law and order. But almost all locals who spoke

to **Himalayan times** call it a way of harassing people and an infringement of their individual rights. Says Norbu Lama of Kalimpong College, “If I wear an ear ring it does not make me a criminal. I as a citizen of free India have a right to wear any type of ear ring without breaking any rules of the land.” His friend interrupts to say, “I do not wear any decorations on my ears but if in case I did and I am ordered on the road by some policeman to remove it and throw it down a drain, I will surely file a case in the court of law.”

Though there were not too many people willing to defend the Police in the ear ring episode, the responses to the crack down on skimpy clothing managed to evoke mixed reactions from the general public. While senior citizens and the more conservative public supported the drive, others spewed fire against the drive. Jyoti Karki, coordinator of the Women organizations who led the crack down says, “The youth of today is getting carried away in the name of fashion. We too believe in fashion but there should be a limit. We have no bad intentions and are doing it all in good faith.” The Inspector in Charge of the Kalimpong Police Station, Mr. P.K.Dahal, supporting the women organizations says, “We are supporting this drive. Girls wearing revealing dresses which attract the attention of the boys should be discouraged.” But not everyone seems to agree with Karki and Dahal. Anil Lopchan, a prominent youth activist of the town, says, “People wear dresses in which they feel comfortable. You cannot wear a sweater in summers. No one should be embarrassed in Main Road just because the cloths they are wearing is not to the liking of certain people.”

Says sixteen year old Deepu Gurung of Topkhana, who was given a verbal thrashing by some of the women activists on Independence Day for wearing a short T-shirt, “How could they shout at me in such a way in front of so many people. Just because I wore a T-shirt which was a little short does not mean that I have a loose moral character. It could be that a girl wearing tight jeans and short tops could have an exemplary moral character while someone else covered from head to toe in a *burkha* may have questionable moral values. So what’s the point in treating cloths as an indicator of a persons moral character?”

Surprisingly another sixteen year old Anita Tamang supported the drive by the women organizations. “Some of my friends sometimes dress so outlandishly that it is hard for us to even walk a short distance without getting provoking looks from people walking in the streets. I feel style should be done in such a way that it makes you look beautiful rather than making you look vulgar.”

The controversy is all set to continue with the women organizations vowing to continue with their efforts. Says Jyoti, “Our activities are not confined only to Independence Day and we intend to continue with our cause.”

The battle lines are clearly drawn between the good and the evil (but who is exactly evil and who exactly is good depends on which side of the divide one belongs to). But one thing is certain; if such controversies persist then very soon the festivity associated with Independence Day in Kalimpong will probably die an unnatural death. ■



Gandhi Ashram

Story & Photos by
Barbara Grover

They live in cramped mud slab houses, without running water or electricity. Most cannot afford a pair of shoes. Until a few years ago, these children ate little more than a bowl of rice each day, had no idea what a violin was, and had no hopes for the future. Today, however, these six- to twelve-year-olds who come from some of India's poorest Himalayan villages make up the classical violin orchestra at the Jesuits' Gandhi Ashram school. And they are known for giving spellbinding performances.

The most significant performance the children have given so far took place last year before the German ambassador to India at Calcutta's prestigious Saturday Club—hundreds of miles from their home in Kalimpong, a northeastern Indian town near Nepal. As the ragtag orchestra played, the aristocratic crowd became true believers of what Jesuit Fr. Edward McGuire had been preaching for years: that music can be a weapon to fight poverty and illiteracy.

"Violin strings are the bootstraps that will pull these kids up," says McGuire, the Canadian founder of Gandhi Ashram. "This was the first time such a crowd had seen for themselves how playing music can empower even poor children intellectually and emotionally."

McGuire opened Gandhi Ashram Elementary School, a place that integrates rigorous violin instruction with an equally demanding academic curriculum, in 1993. He had entered the Society in 1949, spending his novitiate years in Guelph, Ontario. In 1954, a regent at the time, he traveled to Darjeeling, India, and has spent the majority of his many years in India in the field of education. He did serve as assistant to the novice master for a brief time, but in 1993 his provincial asked him to open Gandhi Ashram



In the first year, he recruited only 23 students. One of them was eight-year-old Sunita. There is no better example than she of what McGuire is trying to accomplish with his school.

Before enrolling in the ashram, Sunita spent her days toiling at another family's farm. Like her parents, she was illiterate and on the verge of malnutrition. But after a year at the school, she could read and write not just in her native Nepali but a bit in Hindi and English as well.

And she can play the violin with a determination and dignity that defies her frail body.

"I can't exactly say why, but everything is so different now because of my violin," Sunita explains. "Playing the violin makes me feel so good." As she meticulously places the instrument under her chin, her beautiful music seems even more extraordinary coming from a child who lives with her parents and younger brother and sister in a two-room mud hut.



"I have watched Sunita grow through her music," says head violin instructor Rudi Mani. "As she became more self-assured with her violin, not only did her studies improve but she interacted more with other children."

McGuire hopes that as stories like Sunita's spread beyond Kalimpong—an area previously known only for its lavish Buddhist monasteries and Darjeeling tea plantations—his music theory will become a model for educators around the world. Indeed, more-affluent Western schools, many of which have discontinued music instruction as frivolous, could learn a thing or two from Gandhi Ashram.

Unlike India's public schools, which children cannot attend unless their family can afford school supplies and a uniform, the ashram is free. With only \$20,000 a year, raised mostly from individual donations from Switzerland and Canada, the ashram ("house of learning" in Hindi) employs five highly qualified teachers and provides each student with the use of a violin, all school supplies, and two meals a day.

Mealtime is still a highlight of the school day for these children, who before enrolling in Gandhi Ashram couldn't fathom eating such wholesome, plentiful meals. McGuire believes that providing students with these meals is as essential as providing them with pencils for homework.

"If children are hungry, how can they be expected to concentrate on anything but filling their belly?" McGuire says, adding that without these meals, many of these children would suffer from malnutrition.

McGuire first came up with his music theory back in 1980, while working with demographically similar children at St. Robert's School in nearby Darjeeling. "I brought over Jogen Kahn, the conductor of the Calcutta Symphony, to give the students at St. Robert's some culture," McGuire says. "After watching them sit in perfect silence, I realized the remarkable effect music had on children."

After that day, McGuire hired a violin teacher and bought eight violins from Braganza and Company, a classical music store in Calcutta. Within three weeks of picking up violins for the first time, the St. Robert's students were playing classical music and performing better in their studies.

Teachers at the ashram find the same results. "I was stunned by the students' learning curve. They were playing music that in England is given to students much older," says British music instructor William Morris, who volunteered at the ashram last year. "It was amazing how children who never played keyboard learned to play classical compositions," Morris adds, recalling that with electricity scarce in the area, the only way to get the keyboard to work is by running it on a car battery. Morris, like everyone affiliated with the ashram, believes it is a place like no other.

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One only needs to enter the school auditorium to see why. Waves of children rush in, heading straight to the cupboard to grab a violin. A large group of children takes its place on stage to practice a concerto; others retreat to far corners of the room to practice individually. All at once, a magical cacophony fills the room, resonating hope for the future.

The school also has a reputation for academic excellence. Even the affluent, who could afford any school in the area, are trying to enroll their children in the ashram.

“If a kid doesn’t have a protruding belly, sallow cheeks, a dirty neck, and no shoes, he is not considered for enrollment,” McGuire says, adding that due to classroom overcrowding and a limited budget, enrollment must be limited to only the poorest of the poor.

McGuire hopes to expand the curriculum to include courses such as computer studies to better prepare the ashram’s students for future jobs. He is well aware that not every child will master the violin, and among those who do, only a few will be able to make a living at it. The playing field, after all, is never even, McGuire admits. But unlike other children in the Kalimpong area, he is convinced that the ashram’s graduates will grow up to be more sophisticated and better able to cope with the world.

“My goal is to find the natural ability in each child and encourage that ability to develop,” McGuire says.

No matter what becomes of these children-whether they go on to higher education or return to work in their villages-classical music will have given them a dramatically different perspective on the world and themselves. It has opened their eyes to new ideas, so when they close them, they no longer dream of a hopeless future. ■

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IN SAFE HANDS



A staff takes care of a pet in the shelter

Darjeeling Goodwill Animal Sanctuary

This article was previously
printed in the *Veterinary
Times*, UK.

By Tim and Julia T P Spotswood

"Bong Busti, Bong Busti. Where is that?" We could feel Dhim's consternation as the hotel staff gave him five different sets of instructions to the Darjeeling Goodwill Animal Sanctuary in Kalimpong, West Bengal. Dhim was our Nepalese driver who had already impressed us with his driving skills. Unfortunately as neither my wife nor I understood Nepali we could only imagine what was being said.

We had come to Kalimpong, a delightful town in the Himalayan foothills, to visit DGAS's veterinary surgeon Dr Naveen Pandey. Kalimpong lies on one of the few overland routes from India to Tibet, and is only a short distance from the borders of Nepal, Sikkim and Bhutan. The scenery is spectacular and on a clear day Kanchenjunga (8598m) can be seen towering high above the town. The district has few roads and those that do exist are challenging for the stoutest of 4 x 4's. In the days of the British Raj Kalimpong was popular as a hill station. The legacy is a curious mixture of Christian churches, quaint bungalows,

Buddhist monasteries, Hindu temples and little gardens bursting with camellias, azaleas, chrysanthemums and poinsettias.

Early on Saturday morning we set off for Bong Busti, bouncing along in the Tata 4 x 4. Dhim had warned us that the road would eventually peter out and sure enough it did - in the middle of a rice field. But from the sound of barking dogs we knew we had to be close to the animal sanctuary and walked down the small path Dhim indicated. The path was very narrow and tortuous but we soon reached the sanctuary. The DGAS's compound has a secure fence enclosing a vet's office and operating suite, a dispensary, kennels, the vet's bungalow, and accommodation for lay staff and any visiting veterinary surgeons. These buildings are all in a lovely well-tended garden.

We were met by Dr Naveen Pandey who enthusiastically told us about the charity. DGAS was set up in 1993 by Mrs Christine Townsend who is also the managing trustee of

the sister charity Help in Suffering in Jaipur. DGAS has adopted ten villages in the Kalimpong district and offers free veterinary treatment to its working animals as well as treating and neutering Kalimpong town dogs free of charge.

Due to the absence of roads and the rugged terrain Naveen and his lay staff may have to walk for several hours to attend livestock. Prolapsed uteri and milk fever are common, as is Bracken fern poisoning which in Kalimpong is associated with enzootic Haematuria and carries a hopeless prognosis. Through Naveen's advice on better housing for cows he is

beginning to see fewer prolapsed uteri.

Preventative medicine is the most important part of his work. He and his team travel to outlying villages, sometimes by vehicle but often walking, and can spend up to a week at a time in a village. There they tramp from door to door vaccinating cattle against FMD and Haemorrhagic Septicaemia, poultry against Newcastle Disease, and dogs against Rabies. Vaccines are readily available in India and are relatively cheap. Cattle and poultry are important for village economy and prior to the poultry vaccination programme a great number of chickens died. During his stay in a village

Naveen will also lecture farmers and schoolchildren on animal husbandry, welfare and rabies.

Rabies, although not a notifiable disease in India, annually kills over 30,000 people. In addition to humanitarian concerns Rabies is of great economic importance for the rural people. Typically it is children aged five to fourteen who are bitten and post exposure vaccination is both costly and of limited availability. Doctors may tell villagers that they do not have any serum, so "wait and see what happens to the dog". Ten or more days of hell. Naveen is of the opinion that young children should be vaccinated against Rabies, as the post exposure antiserum is so unreliable.

The trustees and staff of DGAS quickly realised the greatest contribution they could make to human and animal welfare was a reduction in Rabies. In 1998 their Animal Birth Control programme was started with the aim of creating a sterile street dog population immunised against Rabies. Dogs are caught, spayed at the shelter, and vaccinated against Rabies before release. As bitches are spayed through a small flank incision they are



The Animal Shelter Complex



ready for release three to four days post op. Only healthy animals are neutered and those with intractable disease (chronic mange, venereal and other tumours, fractures etc) are humanely euthanased. When Dr Naveen and his staff are in a village he will also spay as many as possible. All instruments and drapes are sterilised in a pressure cooker, and when necessary animals kept warm with hot water bottles. Anaesthesia is by means of intravenous Ketamine and Xylazine.

Meticulous records are kept of all captures, vaccinations, sterilisations, treatments, releases

and euthanasias. Naveen has spayed over a thousand dogs since starting work for DGAS, sometimes spaying seven in a day. Kalimpong hospital records show that in 2000 there were 294 dog bites and by 2002 only 23. For the last two years there have been no cases of human rabies in the area serviced by DGAS. A wonderful achievement and sure proof that the ABC programme is effective.

Villagers now readily turn to Naveen and his staff for help and advice and there is a gradual improvement in animal welfare. For example farmers are now bringing their goats and pigs to the shelter for castration rather than do it themselves.

My wife and I felt very privileged to have met Dr Pandey. DGAS has made a great contribution to animal and human welfare in Kalimpong through excellent first principles, dedication and communication. We left Kalimpong reflecting on how different the veterinary medicine we practise is, and happy that there are veterinary surgeons like Dr Naveen Pandey and his colleagues. ■

Editor
Sandip C. Jain

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AND THE SILENCE OF THE NATIVES

SOME OBSERVATIONS ON THE NEPALI HISTORIOGRAPHY

By Bidhan Golay

History as an academic discipline concerns itself with the politics of the past. History is not simply about ordering and presenting of fact and events from the past. Rather it is, as the famous British philosopher and historian R.G. Collingwood put it, 'an activity of research and enquiry belonging to science that is, the form of thoughts whereby the historian asks questions and try to answer.' By Collingwood's measure we can see for ourselves where the Nepali history stands. And when we do that we will have to admit with a heavy heart that the history of Darjeeling lie languished and battered in the prisonhouse of academic complacency, and the flirtations of overzealous journalists with history writing. Lest we forget, history writing, as opposed to chronicling, is a far too seriously business to be left in the hands of amateurs. So if we don't take our history writing seriously what we get is a pseudo history, if you like. This history in essence is nothing more than a painstaking ordering and arranging of the huge gamut of Orientalist writings that lay strewn on the path of imperial violence and destruction. Here, let me be bold enough to speak my mind; the Nepali community has failed to product an academic historian of repute. The only possible exception here being Dr. Kumar Pradhan whose Gorkha Conquest, stand out in some ways as the lone native voice caught in the dn of metropolitan voices.

In the two hundred years in the life of the Nepali community we have failed to produce a comprehensive nationalist history, let along a subaltern history. The lack of vigorous intellectual tradition in our community has led to the stagnation of our history and historiography. Nepali history it appears is caught in a time warp where the same old hackneyed historical events dull our senses. Sadly enough, our history for so long is being held hostage by these pseudo historians, whose fixation with imperialist knowledge is nothing but an unabashed admiration for colonial order and modernity. Furthermore, our historians have this innate feeling that their historical works can be authenticated only when it is culled extensively from the western sources at the cost of our rich oral traditions. It is a celebration of the colonial legacy covered by a thin veneer of nationalism. Bold and controversial as these statements are, let me pose a question here: have the Nepali historians ever seriously interrogated colonialism and its legacy? Or let me put it more fashionably: have we written back? Are there any instances of literary insurrections in the native writings? I leave it for the readers themselves to look for the answers.

To be sure, it is not so much the narrative aspect of our history that is problematic but the theoretical part, which gives meaning to the historical materials. Under the prevailing theoretical paradigm, the Nepali history has refused to climb done from the

high horse of nationalism. Now the problem with this nationalist history is that it traverses a path too well structured by the machinations of colonial knowledge production system. The nationalist history in effect becomes a blanket endorsement of the imperialist's knowledge about the natives-the Vansittarts, the Hookers, the O' Malleyes are too firmly perched in our collective consciousness so as to colonise the natives mind forever. The hegemonic force of colonial discourse forces the 'lazy natives' to endorse an image of an idealized and orientalist himself captured in a text carefully tailored for metropolitan consumption. For instance, a close reading of J.D. Hooker's Himalayan Journals would reveal how a white man, that he was, gazed at the natives-the Lepchas in this case. He would exoticise and ridicule the native and his culture all in the same breath. Of course, the great French philosopher Michel Foucault has called this as systems of dispersion in a given discursive formation. This very colonial discourse, ethnographical writings in particular, have become canonical texts for all future production of knowledge about our community from without and more regrettably from within. In this resulting babel the native voice is silenced forever. Our history is forced to exist in a condition of everyday subalterneity. The Nepali nationalist history, swinging ambivalently between the celebration of its famed 'bravery' and the political prudence to create its own space in the larger project of nationalist imagination, tramples over its own micro narratives. As it stares with awe at the grand narratives of anti-

colonial nationalism, it sees its own narratives as a 'lack'.

The project for our historians- if we any- is clear and simple. To start with, our historians should be aware of the debates in historiography that is currently raging in the institutional sites of Universities both in the West and in India. Elsewhere historiography has evolved much beyond the rigid nationalist and elitist framework. Historians have already written "history as a critique", which in effect is a rejection of the Western academic production of historical knowledge. At a time when other historians are buying themselves with the project of provincialising European forms of historical knowledge, we still find ourselves grappling with the task of producing a decent nationalist history. Nepali history has to move ahead with times, and the best way is to engage ourselves in writing a post-Foundational, post- Orientalist history. Perhaps only then can we emancipate our history from the tentacles of the grand narratives of colonialism and nationalism. ■

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GO FOR A SWIM

By Peter Sewitz

The pool is pleasantly nestled in the southern slope with a fine view down the valley and to the mountain range across .

Sensationally good news for Kalimpong: Since April this year we have a public swimming pool – but nobody knows about it.

Go to Barra Mile, okay? Just behind the house of Anand Mani Pradhan, there is a junction, Albert Villa Road it is popularly known, Rilli Road officially, there turn right, down. At the crossing there is also a somewhat timid board, "To Swimming Pool". Follow this road for about two kilometers, pass the houses of Kamal Mani Pradhan and Renu Lina Subha. It is approximately half way to the Rilli River. The future famous new Highway to Siliguri is in a pitiable state and needs urgent repair, with other words it is quite horrible, but certainly not Mr. Deenod Sharma's fault. He is the owner of the pool. You reach it from one of the sharp turns of the road, there is a little bus stop and a small white house and next to it you must follow the narrow lane (left) slightly down the hill. At this point another big sign board would be needed. After half a minute you see the clear blue water to your right below at the slope of the hill. The official name is "DAB Eco Recreation Centre", the area is called Pudung. One can reach the place also from the "Haat Road" from Kalimpong town.

Our three children (my grandchildren) were quite overwhelmed. They learned swimming in the Talkatora Stadium in Delhi and later almost daily used the Siri Fort Sports Complex with its wonderful Olympic size pool. When two and a half years ago we moved (permanently) to Kalimpong, there was only one draw-back: No Swimming Pool! True, the Homes have one, but exclusively only for their own students. Now we have a pool for everybody. It is new, clean, reasonably priced. With your ticket you can stay as long as you wish, from nine in the morning through to evening seven. There is a constant inflow of fresh water from the top and every morning the water is

cleaned and suitable permitted chemicals are added. The pool is 80 ft long and 40 ft wide, 3 ft deep at one side, 7 ft at the other. Two changing rooms with shower and toilet for gents and ladies (but no ladies hours in the pool), a small canteen where you can have tea and soft drinks or some tasty noodle dishes and a roofed gallery on top for viewing or relaxation. The pool is pleasantly nestled in the southern slope with a fine view down the valley and to the mountain range across.

Mr. Deenod Sharma built the pool on his land where he was born. He invested, he told us, 30 lac Rupees out of his own pocket plus some Government loan and now he wishes, of course, that the facility gets known and is being used. On the average, so far, he has about 50 visitors daily. Any school? No, no. Probably the teachers/parents (I suspect) don't understand the meaning of the word „water" and what an excellent, absolutely healthy and refreshing exercise swimming can be for children. One could certainly come to an understanding with Mr. Sharma regarding a reduced ticket or a group or season entry pass. On demand, the canteen can also supply a variety of delicious buns and home-made cookies and even the healthy original Swiss Muesli out of oats, different nuts and raisins. A proper restaurant is under construction, the garden is being beautified, the access road down to the pool and to its just completed parking space is alright and even my son, who sits in a wheel chair, could reach the place without much hassle. Apart from simply swimming, the pool site would be also perfect for children's birthday celebrations and for parties.

So? Go there! What can stop you? It is a truly wonderful addition to Kalimpong's attraction. If you can't swim, press Mr. Sharma to employ a swimming coach. (Tel. Pool 274 354, Mr. Sharma mob. 98323 21416) ■

In the 1864-65 Anglo-Bhutan War the British stretched the Bhutanese troops by opening up multiple front along the length of Bhutan border. However, unlike the Sikkim operation where the Rangeet was bridged, the Tista was not spanned and the battle was fought a good distance away from today's Kalimpong town. The main motive for the British aggression was to cut off the Bhutanese from all the passes leading to the Indian plains. The war was fought between two uneven sides and despite a bit of saber rattling and some resistance the Bhutanese were no match against the more disciplined, better equipped and numerically stronger British forces. The westernmost flank traced the route through Ambik, Algarah and thence to Daling fort. Following the expected victory the entire 'Athara Duar' or the eighteen passes between Assam and since Bengal (Sanskrit 'dwar' or door, opening, pass) became British possession and since the area west of Ambik-Algarah-Daling was cut off from the Bhutanese it was also incorporated into the British gains. Kalimpong proper and its surrounding areas therefore came to British possession not because the British fought for them - it was just a bonus acquisition. Quite naturally the British did not display any

calculated concern to a cheaply obtained land and, regardless of the similarity of the population and terrain to that of Darjeeling, the wrested area was attached to

the same name and in 1907 Siliguri Sub-Division was carved out but Kalimpong remained as an unsolicited attachment to the District Headquarters. The

apathy to this add-on territory was so absolute that for the entire area only two officers were appointed: a manager for the Khas Mahal lands and a Police Inspector. When Kurseong Sub-Division

was created it had a population of 44,653 and in 1901

Kalimpong's

population was very close to that but the status of a Sub-Division still remained a distant dream. By 1911 the population had soared to 55,653 and yet Kalimpong was not made a Sub-Division and the honour was to eventually arrive in 1916 when the population crossed well beyond 70,000: it had taken all of 47 years for area to become a Sub-Division. Question that logically and instantly arise are why the apathy and why the delay in creating the Sub-Division. The answer probably lies in something that Kalimpong could do nothing about: it was after all just a 'bonus land'. ■

The Bonus Land

By Dr. S.B.Wangyel

the Western Duars as the Dalingkote Sub-Division. Kalimpong was left as it was and even the Mondals who collected the poll taxes for the Bhutanese were allowed to continue except that they would be doing so for the British thenceforth. In the following year the Sub-Division of Dalingkote was transferred to Darjeeling and the designation 'Sub-Division' remove. The newly formed district was divided into (a) the Headquarters Sub-Division (960 square miles) consisting of all the hill areas on both sides of the Tista and (b) the Terai Sub-Division that included the foothills. Later (1891) Kurseong became the Headquarters of a Sub-Division by

Your Poems, Articles or Suggestions may be sent to us by E-mail
at the following address

himalayantimes@rediffmail.com

Expression!!!

pretence..... by annie lee

*Strangers ...all in a room,
wearing masks unknown.
Everyone seems to be pretending...
building walls around....
i'm lost in this entire fiasco,
thoughts racing through my head.*

*A thousand questions with only one answer
and everyone has to say.....
keep calm, its only pretence.... play along,
they say..
but no one seems to see the mask that i wear.*

LIFE AND DEATH

BY NGAWANG BHUTIA

When the colour begins to fade from a flower
As the world is watching both dawn and
livelight

The path of man becomes narrower
Preservation and Destruction both came in
right

The thought of man beyond insanity
Because God is regarded as a faultless painter
But the Devil chose the path of naivity.
Heaven and Hell bend like the creator
Like a pinch of sand and a droplet of water
A time when the demon becomes sweet and
the sugar sour

For it is the opening of an infinity crater
Because there is life and death in every hour.

JUST TRY !!!

BY DINA SHRESTHA

EVERYBODY FAILS.....NOBODY IS
PERFECT
BUT THE GREATEST FAILURE IS IF YOU
DON'T TRY
WHY DO WE ALWAYS RUN AND HIDE
AFRAID TO TRY.....JUST TRY!!

TIME FLIES BY AND DREAMS SHATTER
WHEN WILL WE EVER LEARN THAT THINGS
DON'T COME EASY
WE'VE GOT TO GROW UP AND TAKE
CHANCES
HAVE FAITH AND.....JUST TRY!!

WALKING MILES WITH THE DEFEATED
SPIRIT
REALITY SINKS IN WITH NO HOPE
BUT YOU MUST STILL GATHER YOURSELF
AFTER ALL DESTINY WILL DECIDE,
SO.....JUST TRY!!

LIFE CHANGES AND SO MUST WE
DON'T LET PRIDE TAKE OVER YOU
LIVE LIFE WITH A SMILE
CAUSE NOTHING HURTS WHEN
YOU.....JUST TRY!!

YOU KNOW YOU DESERVE BETTER
YOU'VE GOT THE POTENTIAL
SACRIFICES SHOULD BE MADE SOMETIMES
NOTHING MORE.....JUST TRY!!

REASONS MAY NOT BE JUSTIFIED RIGHT
THEY MAY NOT UNDERSTAND YOU
TEARS MIGHT FLOW IN VAIN
FOLLOW YOUR HEART AND.....JUST TRY!!

THE STARS SHINE DOWN
DARKNESS VANISHES AT YOUR
HOLD YOUR HEART TIGHT
FOCUS ON YOUR GOALS AND.....JUST TRY!!

YOU DO'T HAVE TO BE A GENIUS
CLOSE YOUR EYES AND BREATHE
LET GO OF YOUR MISERY AND
IF YOU WANT TO WIN.....JUST TRY!!

YOU CAN SUCCEED.....JUST TRY!!

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Kalimpong

where time and tide waits....

By Wg. Cdr. Prafulla Rao

Slow down and enjoy life. It's not only the scenery you miss by going too fast - you also miss the sense of where you are going and why.

Eddie Cantor (1892 - 1964)

They stayed here for nine months.... an extremely private couple I thought, or is it that westerners prefer it that way? They seemed sad to leave Kalimpong even though one would have expected them to be ecstatic- they were heading home after all; "We'll be back" they said, as they waved a hesitant goodbye.

They are not unique, I have heard and met so many westerners and tourists who are seduced by some inexplicable mystique of this sleepy little place. Let's face it, in gross terms Kalimpong has nothing much to offer compared to her more glamorous sisters, Gangtok and Darjeeling. Both these places boast of quite a few glitzy hotels, bars and other tourist attractions like the Himalayan Mountaineering Institutes, Zoological parks, Changu lake with a modicum of night life thrown in; whereas, as someone remarked about Kalimpong "everything closes down in your town by 8.00pm, one can't even get dinner!" Then of course, there are the bombed out roads and the perennial shortage of water....

So why Kalimpong?

Perhaps, it is the people then, which make the difference and to a small measure the climate, which succinctly put, is simply glorious.

The people of Kalimpong are by nature carefree, fun loving and gregarious but a small anecdote may explain what I mean, better...I was chatting with a friend of mine one day when a young American walked up to us and asked my friend some questions about Kalimpong....all the

questions were answered very patiently by my friend and when he asked for directions to go to a monastery, a rough map was sketched out for him showing how he should reach the place. The tourist looked amazed and confused that anyone would proffer such help and walked away after profusely thanking my friend.

This is quintessentially Kalimpong.

Most of the people of Kalimpong would have behaved in exactly the same way had they been confronted by the young American because the pace of life slows down here. No one has to run after targets or chase deadlines in this little nugget from heaven so, most importantly- people still have time for people- a phenomenon which is becoming increasingly rare

as the world spins out of control and humans become automatons rushing around for six figure salaries and luxury limousines.

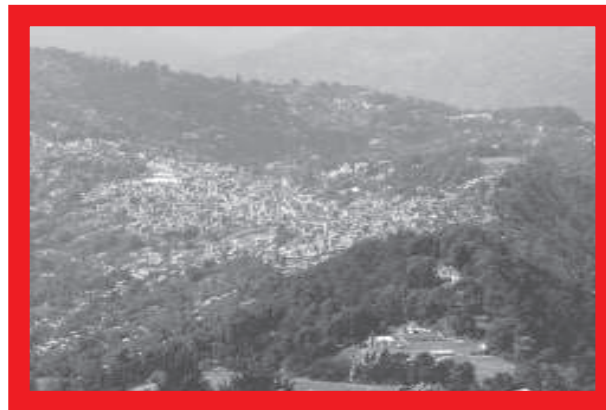
Not so in Kalimpong- here, we still have oodles of time because time and tide gently quiver to a halt as you reach Kalimpong.

So what if there are no glittering shopping arcades and splashy 5 star hotels here; at least the scenery is not whizzing by in a crazy blur....

AND by the way...

Who's got blood pressure and the ulcers?????

And who has all the smiles ????? ■



nostalgia



Photograph courtesy Kalimpong Stores(Kodak) and available for sale



A VIEW OF THE PRESENT DAY AREA
ABOVE THE PRANAMI SCHOOL AT
10.5 MILE, IN THE EARLY 1930'S

ON THE CONTRIBUTORS

Ms. Barbara Grover

Is a freelance photojournalist who has traveled to the Himalayas, Zanzibar, and the Mosquito Coast, among many other points.

Tim & Julia Sportswood

Are senior veterinary doctors from England who have visited Kalimpong Goodwill Animal Shelter and were impressed by its service.

Bidhan Gholay

Is a research scholar in the School of Social Sciences under JNU in New Delhi

Dr. Sonam B. Wangyel

Is a Jaigao based doctor who is acknowledged as an authority on the history of this region.

Wg. Cdr. Prafulla Rao

Is the Secretary of the Kalimpong Consumers Forum and a prominent citizen of the town.

Mr. Anup Moktan

Is a student of Kalimpong College who is also a correspondent with Himalayan Times.

Mr. Gautam Lama

Is a teacher in Benjamin's Garden School and is a cartoonist with a Siliguri based paper.

Mr. Karan Shah

Is a young career journalist reporting for a National daily from Kalimpong.

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